



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety
and Inspection
Service

Washington, D.C.
20250

SEP 17 2002

Dr. Romano Marabelli
General Director
Department of Food and Nutrition and
Public Veterinary Health
Ministry of Health
Piazza Marconi, 20-00144
Rome, Italy

Dear Dr. Marabelli:

This letter transmits the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) final report of a meat inspection system audit conducted in Italy from April 15 through May 16, 2002. Comments from the Government of Italy have been included as an attachment to the final audit report.

FSIS appreciates all of the actions taken by the Government of Italy to resolve prior audit deficiencies. FSIS believes that the Government of Italy has taken the necessary actions to restore faith in its meat inspection system. These actions include the issuance and country-wide implementation of various inspection service circulars specifically focused on the enforcement of FSIS inspection requirements in certified establishments. These actions also include the procurement of additional monetary resources and personnel for its Office of Hygiene of Meat, Fish, Milk, Eggs and other Food of Animal Origin so that more resources are available to address food safety issues. In addition and quite notable, Italy has established an independent inspection audit function at headquarters. The establishment of this audit function is a significant step that highlights Italy's commitment to improving its meat inspection system. The reauthorization of the Ministry of Health's ability to enforce inspection requirements at regional and local levels is also a significant step in regaining control over its inspection system. These actions reflect Italy's sincere desire to improve its meat inspection system to ensure that only wholesome products are produced for export to the United States.

If you have questions or need additional information, you may reach me at 202-720-3781, facsimile at 202-690-4040, or email at sally.stratmoen@fsis.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Stratmoen". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sally" and last name "Stratmoen" clearly legible.

Sally Stratmoen, Chief
Equivalence Section
International Policy Staff
Office of Policy, Program Development
and Evaluation

Enclosure

cc:

Lisa Hardy Bass, Counselor, U.S. Embassy, Rome
Francisco Forte, Second Secretary, Embassy of Italy, Washington, DC
Norval Francis, Minister/Counselor for Agr Affairs, USEU/Brussels
Joerg Niederberger, Agriculture, EU Mission to the US, Wash DC
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Country File (Italy—Apr 02 final audit)